

Peter Ambuofa Play

A play based on a true historical story

Characters

Character	Scene
Narrator	1,4,6,7,9
Ambuofa	1,2,3,6,7,8,9
Ambuofa's Father	1,6
Ship Master	1,2
Friend 1	1,3,5,6,8,9
Friend 2	1,3,5,6,8,9
Ship Assistant	2
Arthur	2,4,9
Foreman	3,4
Florence	4,9
Ambuofa's Mother	1,6
Boy 1	6
Boy 2	6
Friend's Father	6
Friend's Mother	6
Younger Brother	1,6,8,9
Older Brother	1,7
1st Attacker	7
2 nd Attacker	7
3 rd Attacker	7
Village Chief	7
Charlie	8
Silas	8
Missionary	9
Canoe Man	9
Ambuofa's wife and daughter	9

Props

Large cardboard cutout of a ship. Boxes to make stairs behind so that actors can go in and out of the 'ship' or up on deck. **Canoe** for getting from the ship to the shore.

Pot plants to create scenery.

Bundles – the food that mother is wanting to give to Ambuofa; the goods from Australia that Ambuofa gives to the family; supplies that Florence gets ready to take.

Costumes

Australian characters wear 17th Century English costume.

Solomon Islanders wear traditional costumes, except the ones who have come back from Australia who wear shirts.

SCENE 1: A long journey

Setting: Beach scene with a large sailing ship

Narrator

Ambuofa was a young man who lived at the northern tip of the island of Malaita, in the eastern region of the Solomon Islands, during the early 1890's. In those days Australia sugar cane farmers would send ships to the Solomon Islands to recruit workers for 3 years, and then return them back home. Ambuofa had been sitting with his father on the beach on the islands of Malaita, gazing out to sea, when he noticed the sails on the horizon.

Ambuofa

Dad there's a ship coming into the bay! It looks like the one that takes men to work in Australia.

Father

True, it is one of those ships from Australia, Ambuofa. You are old enough to go and work over there yourself. I want you to go on that ship and work for those sugar cane farmers. If you go and work in Australia, then we can buy clothes and other things to bring back to our family.

Ambuofa

Look! Here come the men who went away three years ago!

Ambuofa and his father go down to the shore. Several young men get off the boat carrying bundles in their arms and on their backs, such as clothing and other goods.

Ship Master (Australian)

Are there any strong young men here who want to work in Australia?

Ambuofa

Yes, I'll go.

Ambuofa lines up next to the ship and two of his friends join him.

Ship Master

Right. Let me have all your names. Get into the small boat and we'll go. I want to visit another village down the coast before night-fall. *(Ship Master writes down the names.)*

Ambuofa and 2 Friends *(aboard the ship, speaking to family members on the shore)*

Goodbye! We'll come back with presents for you.

Family Members (Ambuofa's Father, Mother, Younger brother, Older brother)

Goodbye!

Ship Master

Get down below! Keep out of the way while we get going. You can come up on deck when we are out to sea. I don't want any injuries. The stronger you are, the better the price I get for you.

Ambuofa *(to his friends)*

I'll be glad to get on the land again. This rough sea is awful, and I feel sick!

Ship Master

We'll be arriving at Bundaberg soon. Get up on deck now, everyone. Hurry up!

SCENE 2: Arriving in Australia

Setting: Wharf scene in Australia with bags of sugar in carts or wheel barrows. Men going here and there loading and unloading.

Ambuofa

Look at those huge ships. What are they doing with all those bags on the wharf? What's in them?

Ship Assistant

They're loading bags of sugar on to the big ships to send to countries far away.

Ambuofa and friends are now on shore.

Ship Master *(to Arthur Young who is with a group of Australian men ready to receive the Islanders)*

I've got some good, strong young men for you this time, Mr. Young. They are from Malaita. Take a look at them. They look like a bunch of hard workers, don't you think?

Arthur

Yes. I'll take all of that group there. *(Arthur hands over money to the ship master.)*

OK lads. Get on to my boat and we'll go up river to my plantation. *(Ambuofa and his friends point to the sugar cane fields on the way.)*

Here we are. This is my cane farm, called Fairymead. You see those sheds over there? That's where you will sleep and live. Find yourselves a bunk bed and settle in.

And that building over there is where our food is prepared and where you eat. The food is different here - no yams or taro. We mostly eat rice or bread with some meat. And there's plenty of fruit around.

SCENE 3: The cane fields

Setting: Ambuofa and friends in the cane fields. Pot plants around to represent sugar cane.
Cart for loading sugar cane.

Foreman

You can each take a machete and you'll have to keep it sharpened with this file. Slash into the base of the cane stalk and toss it in a pile behind you. Another team of men will pick it up and load it on to the cart. The cart's over there. *(pointing)*

Ambuofa

What's that huge animal over there? *(pointing to a horse)*

Foreman

It's a horse! The horse pulls the cart when it's loaded, and takes the cane away to the get made into sugar.

(Ambuofa and friends start work, bending over and cutting cane.)

Ambuofa

This is hot work and I'm very thirsty!

Friend 1

Here, have a drink of water from this water bag.

SCENE 4: Florence has an idea.

Setting: Inside the farmhouse

Narrator

Arthur Young's sister, Florence Young, lived on the farm and she taught Bible lessons on Sundays to all the children who lived there.

Florence

Arthur, I feel so sorry for those men. They've never heard about Jesus, God's Son, or about the Creator God. God loves them as much as He loves us, but no-one has told them about Him. There isn't a Christian missionary to help them anywhere around here.

Arthur

That's true, Florence, but what can we do about it?

Florence

I believe God wants me to teach them. I could have a reading and Bible class on Sundays when the men don't have to work. What do you think about that?

Arthur

But these fellows have never had any schooling. They've never learned to read. They've never even seen a book before. They don't speak English very well at all. They speak Pidgin! Don't you think you'd be wasting your time?

Florence

Then I'll learn Pidgin!

Arthur

Alright then, but I don't like your chances.

Narrator

Florence persisted, believing God was calling her to do it. Their foreman's help was enlisted. He spoke to the workmen one evening explaining to them in Pidgin as best he could.

Foreman (*to the men in the fields*)

On Sunday Miss Young wants to talk to you. She will teach you how to read, and she will teach you about God our Creator and Jesus His Son. If you would like to join the class, come along on Sunday.

Narrator

Ten men came to the first class on the following Sunday. Arthur and the other managers were surprised to see the number of men in the class growing, and their interest and understanding steadily increasing. In 1885, nearly three years after the Sunday lessons began, one man, Jimmie Aoba, stayed behind after the class. He told Florence that he wanted to become a Christian, and wanted Bible lessons every day! So Florence started Bible lessons after work on week days. Jimmie was in poor health and some months later he died of tuberculosis. But within nine months of Jimmie's death, twelve of his friends became Christians.

Ambuofa and his friends from Malaita also became Christians and for the three years they spent at Fairymead, they learned about living a Christian life. Ambuofa chose a new name for himself, Peter, after Peter from the Bible. He was now called Peter Ambuofa. The time came for the return to their island home. The three years had passed.

SCENE 5: Home to Malaita

Setting: the wharf and ship

Ambuofa and his friends are at the wharf. They board the ship to go back to Malaita.

Ambuofa (*to his friends*)

You know, it's going to be hard going back to our people in the village. They'll want us to be like them, and that's not the Christian way to live. I heard that some of the Christian men who went back were killed by their families because they didn't want to return to the old ways in the village.

Friend 2

We should pray for our people and ask God to help them to know Him. And let's pray that God will make us strong to face whatever lies ahead.

(They pray together.)

Ambuofa

Look! There's Malaita! You can just see the tallest mountains away over there.

Friend 1

Oh, it will be good to see our parents and brothers and sisters again!

Friend 2

It will be wonderful to have yams and taro to eat.

Ambuofa

I know it's wonderful to be returning home to our families, but I'm praying that they will believe the Christian message that we have learned. We know God loves us, but they haven't heard about Him yet.

Scene 6: Home in Malaita

Setting: Beach scene and ship.

Ambuofa and 2 friends get off with the goods they have brought from Australia.

It's our village tradition that all newcomers to the village must be invited before they can set foot in the village – even us. I can see some boys on the beach catching crabs. I'll ask them to go to the village and tell our families that we have arrived. Let's wait here until our families arrive.

Ambuofa goes to talk to the boys who start walking along the path to the village. Ambuofa and friends sit on the sand and wait, watching the mountain path for the first sign of their family members. Then Ambuofa jumps up.

Hey here come my parents!

The parents come towards Ambuofa, father carrying spears and mother carrying two large bundles.

Mother

Is that you, Ambuofa?

Ambuofa

Yes Mum, it's me!

Mother

You have changed since we saw you last. Your hair is short now instead of long. And you have such a happy face now!

Ambuofa

Yes Mum. I have changed. I have learned about someone called Jesus, who is God's Son, and he has made a difference to my life.

Father

What are these strange stories you bring? Who is this person you talk about? Put these ideas away. Come back to the village and take up your life again in the traditions of our ancestors.

Ambuofa

I follow the way of Jesus now. I can't follow the old way anymore. The new Christian way is better for all of us – even you!

Ambuofa gives to his mother the goods he has brought for the family from Australia.

Mother (taking taro out of her bundle)

Son, come back with us to the village. This taro is your food, but if you don't come back with us you'll die of hunger.

Narrator

Ambuofa slowly shook his head. He desperately wanted to be with his family again but he couldn't go back to the old godless ways. His mother put the taro back in the basket, giving Ambuofa nothing. He recognised this as a sign that they rejected him from the family unless he turned his back on his new way of life and came back to the village with them. Sadly he watched, with a heavy heart, as his parents climbed back up the mountain track without him. Ambuofa and his two friends remained at the beach for a few days, until the families of the two friends heard they had returned.

The parents of the other 2 boys come down the track to the beach.

Friend's Father

We have heard the strange stories that you have brought back with you from Australia. You belong with us in our village.

Friend's Mother

Yes, you will starve if you stay here! Your brothers and sisters are waiting for you!

The two friends get up and go with their parents back home along the track. Ambuofa is left alone.

The two boys who had previously been catching crabs come to the beach.

Ambuofa

Hey, remember me? You were the boys who went to the village to tell my family that I had arrived. Unfortunately my family don't want me unless I change back to my old ways and

follow the witchcraft traditions of our village. I can't do that because I have given my life to Jesus Christ,

Boy 1

Yes. We too were in Australia, and we too became Christians and cannot live in the village. That's why we have to catch crabs to feed ourselves.

Ambuofa

Let's help each other to find food. But there are not many food trees around here. Let's pray.

"Lord, we have no food to eat here. Help us to find food, please."

Ambuofa looks up and sees an old tree called a nwanwa'o, with seed fruits on it. He picks the seeds.

We can cook these seeds on the fire.

Narrator

This tree continued to bear fruit for the next six months, which was a miracle, for this tree would not normally bear both immature and ripe fruit at the same time or for so long a time.

Ambuofa

Now we've got to go up the hill where the soil is better, and plant a food garden.

Narrator

They set to work with digging sticks to prepare the garden. An old woman gave them some plants, taro, yams and young banana shoots. After six months they were able to harvest the first food from their garden. One day, soon after their first harvest, Ambuofa went to the nwanwa'o tree looking for fruit.

Ambuofa

There's no more fruit on the nwanwa'o tree. Our Heavenly Father kept the nwanwa'o tree bearing fruit for as long as we needed it, but now we have our taro and yams we don't need it. Thank you Father for providing the fruit. This is one of your miracles.

Narrator

Once the food garden was established, Ambuofa ventured to climb the mountain track to visit his people. When he told them the good news of Jesus, one of his brothers and another boy were interested and wanted to know more.

Younger Brother

We want to know more of this Jesus story. Can we come and live with you so we can hear more about it?

Ambuofa

Of course you can. We can put up another bush house and make more food gardens. We would be pleased for you to join us.

SCENE 7: Hard times

Narrator

Ambuofa was not particularly good at reading and writing, but he certainly had God's word in his heart. He now had four boys to teach the Christian way. Often he thought about Miss Young and the teachers she appointed to the sugar plantations and wished she could send someone here to help them.

One day they noticed a ship sailing into the harbour, bringing back workers who had served their three years on the plantations. Quickly Ambuofa sprang into his canoe and paddled at full speed to the ship. As the men disembarked, he climbed up on deck, looking around for something to write on. This was his chance to send a message to Miss Young. He picked up an old sack that had been tossed into a corner, chewed some betel nut to produce red ink, and wrote with his finger on the sack, "Come, help me". Peter Ambuofa.

Tying it up with a length of bush string he handed it to a worker who was boarding the ship, going to work in Australia. He asked him to pass on the message to Miss Young at Fairymead. A thousand miles away, and passed from hand to hand, the message eventually reached Florence Young and her friends.

Back at the beach-side settlement there was trouble for Ambuofa. His young brother, who had been living with him to learn the Christian way, suddenly died. Ambuofa's older brother came running down the track extremely angry.

Older Brother

You've brought white man's devils to kill our young brother. We'll kill you for this.

Narrator

Ambuofa knew they meant it, so had to be always on the alert, watching out for danger signs. But God protected him, time and again.

Ambuofa

I won't sleep there tonight. I'll move to the other side of the house.

The older brother comes and thrusts a spear through the wall of the hut but fails to hit Ambuofa.

Narrator

And on another day the older brother and friends were waiting to ambush Ambuofa, thinking that he would be walking along the main track.

Ambuofa

I won't go the usual way today. *(He walks a different way and the enemies have to go back home.)*

Narrator

So the ambush failed and Ambuofa was protected again.
One night, armed men crept up near his hut, spears and clubs in hand, prepared to kill him.

First Attackers

What's that bright light in the hut?

Second attacker

I don't know what it is but I'm scared!

Third attacker

I'm not staying here. Let's go!

Narrator

And they all fled off through the bush back to their village to tell of the amazing thing they had seen. God's angels had once again preserved Ambuofa's life.

Another time, he was planting taro when a group of village men, armed with guns, crept up behind him, preparing to shoot. But heavy rain wet the gunpowder and once again Ambuofa's life was spared. The village people now started to talk among themselves believing that Ambuofa's God must be very powerful.

First villager

Ambuofa's God must be great if He can make his garden grow in a drought.

Second villager

And He protects Ambuofa from us when we try to kill him.

Village leader

Perhaps we should send someone down to learn about Ambuofa's God.

Third villager

We'd better send the women and children down. After all, they're only women; it won't matter if any harm comes to them.

Narrator

So they chose some of the women and children to go down to the coastal village to learn from Ambuofa.

SCENE 8: Help arrives

Ambuofa

There's a ship coming into the harbour!

Everyone rushes down to the beach to see who would be on the ship. A small boat is lowered over the side and some men row to the shore.

Ambuofa

It's Charlie and Silas. I remember them from Australia! They are Christians!

Ambuofa to Charlie and Silas

Will you stay and help me, my friends? I need help teaching these people, and you have just come back from Australia where you learnt the Bible from Miss Young.

Charlie

Ambuofa, you have done a great work for God here all by yourself. We will be very pleased to stay and work with you.

SCENE 9: Florence responds to the call**Narrator**

Other Christian men who returned from Australia joined Ambuofa and his friends in teaching the Bible. They prayed for Malaita, that the day would soon come when all Malaitans would be Christians.

Then in 1900 the new Australian Federal Government passed a law. It stated, "*All labourers imported from the islands are to be returned to their homes by 1906. No more labourers are to be recruited.*"

When the Young family and other supporters of her Mission heard this, they discussed the matter together.

Arthur

This new law means we won't have any labourers to teach in five years. Maybe God is telling us to respond to Ambuofa's calls for help.

Florence

I will go! And I will ask three other missionaries on our team to join me. Let's get prepared.

Florence *(with the 4 missionaries (one woman and two men))*

Now what do we need?... six months' worth of supplies, a house that we can put together when we get there, a small boat for travel around the islands.

*Florence and missionaries get all their things together and start packing the ship.
They board the ship.*

Narrator

When the ship finally arrived in Malaita, about noon, they saw a large canoe coming towards them.

Florence *(looking out from the ship)*

Are they friends or not?

Missionary

They're wearing shirts and trousers. They must be friends who have been in Australia! Let's signal to them that we're their friends. Let's sing a song they'll know.

Florence and missionaries sing a Christian song.

As the canoe draws closer the men in the canoe join in the song.

Canoe Man

We're very happy to welcome you to our island! We're really very proud to be the first ones to greet you. Let us help you ashore.

Crowd of people are waiting on shore. Ambuofa is there with his wife and little daughter.

Narrator

Florence and the missionaries listened in amazement as Ambuofa told them of all the Lord had done during his ten years there. His parents and four of his brothers had become Christians; only one brother would still not believe in Jesus. Many others came for teaching. On Sundays there were around two hundred at the worship and teaching meetings.

Peter Ambuofa Activities

This is a play created around the true story of Ambuofa from the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands, in the early 1890s. In those days the Australian government recruited Solomon Islanders to come to Australia to work on the sugar plantations. The islanders became known as the 'Blackbirders'. Florence Young, the sister of a plantation owner, was led to start Bible and reading sessions for the workers on her brother's plantation. As a result, Ambuofa became a Christian. After three years, when his contract expired and it was time to return to Malaita, his family rejected him because he had given up on the traditional ways of witchcraft. This is the amazing story of how Ambuofa lived on the beach and gradually set up a community of Christians, mainly those returning from Australia who were also rejected by their families. Eventually Florence Young, with three other missionaries, sailed to Malaita to help with Bible teaching. Christianity took root and the families started to see that Ambuofa's God was real and true. He chose the Christian name of Peter, so is known as Peter Ambuofa.

As a class you can organise the production of the play. You can recruit students from other classes to take part.

Questions (Answer after reading the play.)

1. How did the Australian government take advantage of Solomon Islanders?
2. Why did the Solomon Islanders agree to take part in the program?
3. Explain the similarities and differences between this program and the slave trade practiced by England and America?
3. Describe the aspects that made coming to Australia a culture shock for the Solomon Islanders.
4. How did Florence Young go out of her way to help the Solomon Islanders?
5. Why was it difficult for the Solomon Islanders to return home after the 3-year program?